

# Belgium

## I. The Industrious Land of Fleming & Walloon

By Hamilton Fyfe

Special Correspondent of the "Daily Mail" in France and Belgium

**B**ELGIUM, as a country, is better known to British people than any other, partly because it is so near to England, partly because its wealth in beautiful buildings and famous pictures has caused trips across the North Sea to be made cheap and attractive. British tourists, as a rule, make their first acquaintance with the Continent by visiting Belgium. Some remember it best by the parade and casino at Ostend; some by the glowing magnificence of Rubens and the sombre impressiveness of Rembrandt; some by the huge modern Law Courts in Brussels, of which the cost made the economical Belgian pull a wry face, proud though he was of the result.

Every one who has travelled even in a small way has delighted his eye with the Grand Place at Brussels, with its glorious Flemish fronts; has wandered through the silent streets of melancholy Bruges, and gazed at the relics of past greatness; has looked out of the railway-carriage window (obedient to his guide-book) and marvelled at the intensive cultivation of the Pays de Waes.

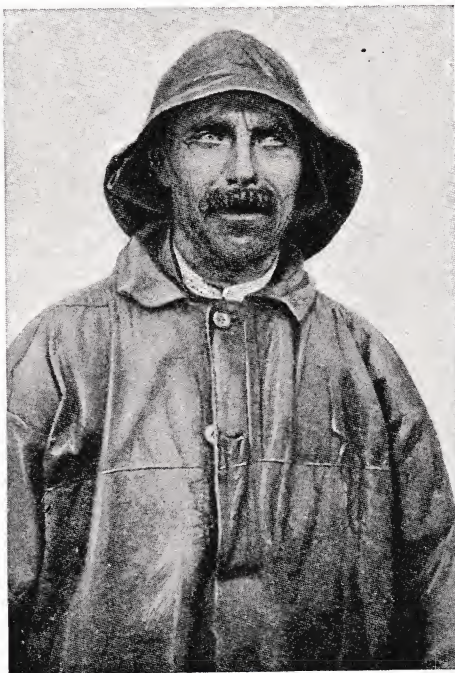
Yet, with all this knowledge of Belgium as a country, the British have very little acquaintance with or understanding of the Belgians as a people. Neither race

is expansive, neither reveals itself quickly. The Belgians have not the same knack as the French of appearing to open their minds and lay bare their characters to the stranger. Many British people fancy they know all about the French from the conversations they have had with hotel proprietors, shopkeepers, casual travelling acquaintances. These people do not understand that the French are good-humouredly imposing upon them an artificial character, and that they are in truth one of the most difficult races to know.

Very few British people, however, even profess to know the Belgians. Before a Belgian will talk with any freedom it is necessary to win his confidence, to warm his heart.

Consequently, like all possessors of reserved natures, the people of Belgium are misunderstood. Until the war they were treated, for the most part, with tolerant disdain. They were "the people who thought they won the Battle of Waterloo." Their policemen were ignorantly and unjustly held up to derision in the pages of "Punch." Sanctimonious surprise was shown at their toleration of a king like Leopold II., whose good qualities were overlooked.

The war brought a change. The Belgians became



**FLEMISH FISHER OF THE DUNES**  
Weathered by the same North Sea, he seems  
own brother to the East Anglian

improving the cultivation of their land, and saving up for their old age. To satisfy these modest ambitions the

children's capital amounted to a sovereign a head.

Perhaps another reason for the perseverance in wearisome toil which pushed



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a nation of heroes. No praise of them could be too high. No assistance to them in their misfortune could be too generous to express our gratitude. Upon this mood followed reaction. And in the end it was discovered that, as a nation, the British knew as little of the Belgian nation as it did before.

Few British people had even managed to grasp the peculiar make-up of the Belgian nation. It is composed of two

distinct races, the Flemings and the Walloons. The former, akin to the Dutch, belong to the same Teutonic stock as the Anglo-Saxons. The latter have more in common with the French. The Fleming is fair and rubicund, and inclines to be short. The Walloon is dark and pale, and of a larger build, except in districts where growth has been stunted by conditions of life. The Fleming is more industrious. The

Walloon is quicker-witted. Walloon women have more business ability, are better cooks and house-keepers, show more taste in dress than the Flemish women.

In character they differ less than surface appearances suggest. For nearly five centuries they have been united under the same rulers, and they have never fought with each other. They are of the same faith, the Roman Catholic, but they have always spoken separate languages. No attempt to make either French or Flemish predominate has ever had any hope of success, though the enthusiasts for the recent Flemish movement do complain of French "domination." While the Walloon is the more cultivated, the Fleming has the more forceful character. Both work hard, both cherish independence both personal and national, and both tend to value material advantages above spiritual values or ideals.

The Belgians not only tolerated their king, Leopold II., who was to the rest of the world a scandalous liver, bringing discredit upon his high position; they even liked



WALLOON LAND GIRL FACES THE CAMERA

Powerful in physique, Walloon women share in the heaviest field work on their own smallholdings. They often carry their babies with them in panniers on their back

*Photo, Miss V. Onslow*



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him, for they saw that he had done a great deal for them. They liked his common-sense and the bluntness of speech which made him tell the Burgo-master of Brussels, in his speech after his State entry into the capital as king, that "there was a bad smell from the river which ought to be improved away." They liked him because he worked hard all his life and bestowed the wealth he amassed upon national objects, because he found Brussels a small provincial town, and left it a city worthy to rank with other capitals. These merits seemed to them to outweigh the scandals of his private life, with which they considered they had no concern.

Nothing like the development of Belgium was seen during the nineteenth century. Very few examples of so rapid a change from subservience and poverty to successful self-government and prosperity could be found in any age. From the "good Belgians, humble and obedient," of Austrian reports during the period of Austria's rule in the Low Countries to "the freest people on the Continent of Europe," as an Englishman declared them to be some quarter of a century ago, the wheel has gone full circle.

As soon as they had won their liberty the possibility of all kinds of openings for enterprise and energy spread out before Belgian eyes. The men of large ideas set to work on large schemes. The mass of the people began to think about owning their homes, improving the cultivation of their land, and saving up for their old age. To satisfy these modest ambitions the



ARTISTIC AND PRACTICAL, TOO

How satisfactory from an artistic point of view a working-girl's dress may be is demonstrated by this other picture of a Flemish milkmaid carrying her can

Government helped the Belgian people. They are by temperament thrifty, but they could not have practised this virtue to such good purpose if the State had not put opportunities in their way. From their earliest years at school the children of Belgium are encouraged to think about saving money. They are given Savings-Bank books, if their parents can start accounts for them, and in most Belgians the habit of saving begun at school endures through life. In the primary schools some years ago the children's "capital" amounted to a sovereign a head.

Perhaps another reason for the perseverance in wearisome toil which pushed





PEASANT WOMEN CHAFFERING AT A VEGETABLE STALL IN BRUGES

Belgium is particularly rich in light railways. Over these lines vast quantities of fresh produce are carried daily from the many intensively cultivated smallholdings in the rural districts into the towns, and there retailed in open markets at prices that generally rule very low

*Photo, C. Uchter Knox*





#### MEDIEVAL DRESS AND ARCHITECTURE IN A MODERN WORLD

This is a characteristic glimpse of Bruges—a city that owes its name to the many bridges over the canals that intersect it. The capuchin cloaks worn by most of the women out of doors blend perfectly with the medieval atmosphere of steep roofs and soaring spires



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Belgium forward was the nature of the education given in the schools. It is of a simple, practical character. The teachers are not persons of wide cultivation themselves. They are not well enough paid for the occupation to attract men and women who have been through long training. They begin with £50 a year in country places, rising to £100 in towns. They can rise in twenty-five years to salaries of £80 in the country, £152 in towns. They also get allowances for house rent, but they have to live in the simplest way to make both ends meet.



OLD HANDS BUSY ON AN HONEST CRAFT

Capable housewifery is the Belgian woman's pride. Almost every cottage has its spinning-wheel wherewith the peasants spin the flax they have grown and dressed themselves

Much can be said in favour of a better education than the Belgian child attending a public school receives. The Progressives in politics have long made it one of their chief demands that teachers should be paid more adequately and the nature of the teaching improved. But many Belgians contend that, for a life of steady labour such as falls to the lot of most of their country people, men and women alike, the best preparation is to learn very little beyond the necessary writing, reading, and elementary arithmetic, with some instruction in land cultivation or other industry for the

boys, and with sewing and cooking for the girls. Certainly the Belgian population on the land is as contented as any in Europe, and generally it may be said that the people rub along fairly well, in spite of what seem to Englishmen low wages.

According to our standards, the mass of the Belgians are still poor. They work longer than English people, yet they earn less. There is an illuminating provision in one of their Acts of Parliament, which says that "no child under sixteen shall work more than twelve hours a day." Many children begin

work when they are twelve. The Belgians are, most of them, still under the influence of religious teaching, and still believe that what they suffer in this life will be made up in the next. This makes them apathetic towards reform. Émile Vandervelde, the Belgian Socialist leader, protested bitterly some years ago that for such people as he saw one Christmas Eve at Bruges it was impossible to do anything. Those who moved him to indignation were the processionists who walked round the ancient town, according to the old custom, ending up at the Chapel of the Holy Blood.

"When twelve o'clock strikes three thousand men and women and children, without a cry, without a word, without a murmur, without a signal from any priest, fall on their knees and pray for a few moments. Then rising, still silent, they flow away like a stream to the Grand Place. . . . There is no hope in their eyes, no mystic imagination lights up their faces. They are the hard, dogged faces of peasants, burned by the sun or, it may be, pale from work indoors. Poor and frail figures of workpeople, who would seem never to have dreamed of a better lot." That was the view of a thinker ahead





#### A PROFITABLE CROP: SHEAVES OF FLAX DRYING IN A FIELD

Flax is not reaped, but is pulled up by hand when golden-ripe in seed, fastened in small bundles, and set up in sheaves to dry. Besides being laborious it is often painful work, the tiny thorns upon the branches pricking the skin and being apt to cause blood-poisoning

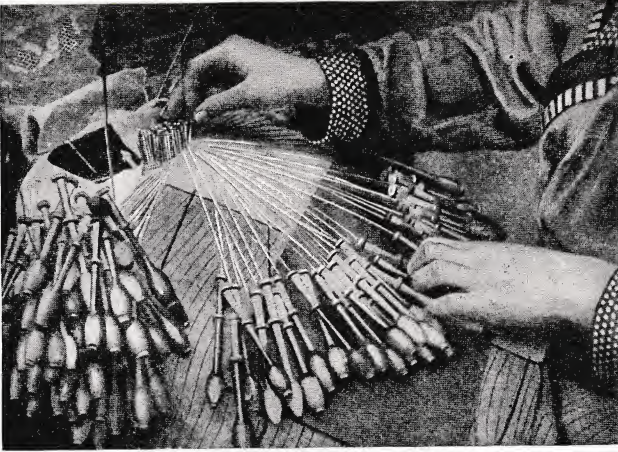


#### STAGES IN A HOME INDUSTRY OF IMMEMORIAL ANTIQUITY

The culture of flax for manufacture into linen goes back to prehistoric times. Of almost primitive simplicity are these flax-combs with which the Belgian women draw the flax to cleanse and separate the fibrous portion from the rest and make it fit for yarn



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HOW PILLOW LACE IS MADE

Pins are inserted into the cushion in a pattern forming the design, and threads contained on separate bobbins are twisted round the pins and round each other

mass of the country folk are more inclined "to bear the ills they have than fly to others which they know not of." On a week-day "the ills they have" may seem to anyone accustomed to a pleasantly varied, well-fed existence to be intolerable. They begin the day early on coffee and bread. They have a piece of bread-and-butter or cheese about ten o'clock. At midday cold bacon or a herring furnishes their principal meal. In the afternoon they take another little snack; in

of his time, an unbeliever, but there was a basis of truth in it. While the town-workers are active when their grievances become too irksome to be borne, the

the evening they sup off soup and bread. That is enough, at all events, to keep them in better health than can be hoped for by those who eat three solid



A GRACIOUS OCCUPATION FOR FEMINE FINGERS

Brussels and Mechlin were early European homes of bobbin lace, and Flemish refugees introduced the art of pillow-lace making into England. Village women ply their beautiful craft seated at their cottage doors, manipulating the many bobbins with astonishing dexterity. Distinctive patterns are perpetuated in different districts





**LACE MAKERS AT HOME ONCE MORE BUSY AT THEIR OLD CRAFT**  
 War and its alarums have died away, and the work of reconstruction in Belgium's villages is begun. While the men are busy the women are out in the street taking up again their old craft of making the delicate pillow-lace to meet the revived demands of peace

meat meals every day. They are seldom ill, the Belgian peasants, and they live long. And they have their little pleasures which the hasty visitor or "investigator" is apt to overlook. He sees them in the fields, the men in wooden shoes and blouses and peaked caps, the women in shapeless garments like sacks, with handkerchiefs tied over their heads, and he says: "How can people like that, who work from early morning until it grows dusk, know what enjoyment means?" But on Sundays, when they have on their good clothes, good boots, and hats, and after a hot dinner of bacon, rabbit, or fish, with plenty of vegetables and always a succulent salad, when they go to sit in a café or outside in a public garden where a band is playing, then one sees that they know very well how to enjoy themselves.

The café and the public garden are prominent features in Belgian life, and every town or country commune has its own band, in which a healthy local pride is taken. In the country there are no

entertainments; in the smaller towns they are few. The people go to bed early and do not seem to want them. But among all classes the habit of sitting at small tables to talk and drink beer is ingrained.

One country pastime still kept up is archery. The Flemings used to be famous with the bow, and they were renowned also for making bows and arrows. There are meetings in several districts, at which archers still compete in shooting at worsted pigeons fixed on a high mast with spars, and very skilfully some of them shoot. Another amusement for all Belgians, whether in town or country, are the yearly Kermesses, which used to have religious significance, but are now, for the most part, fairs. The processions which marked Kermesse have been nearly all dropped, but at Mons they still kept up, until Belgium was devastated, a pageant representing the killing, by a knight called Gilles de Chin, of a dragon which kept a beautiful princess chained up in a forest near by. The Walloons have many such legends



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as this, and many, too, which give them the reputation of a reckless, turbulent folk, who feared neither man nor devil. One story tells how a Walloon chieftain met a woman crying by a fountain and took her home to his castle. Next morning the pretty woman had vanished and the devil was there in her stead. "Well, no matter," the chieftain said to him, not at all alarmed, "tell them in hell that you got good entertainment here."

It is in the Walloon part of the country that coal is mined in such quantities as to be Belgium's most valuable product. Unhappily, the Belgian Black Country is deplorably low in physical standards, in morality, in the scale of civilization generally. In the mining districts of Hainault, known as Le Borinage (the Boring Part), the people are stunted and ill-developed. Their homes are ill-kept. Many of them drink away their earnings. They have in the mass an emaciated, unhealthy appearance. This is due, not to any exceptional

dose of original sin in the people of this region, but to the shameful manner in which the miners were treated by the first mine-owners, the men who got the mines from the State for nothing. These men tried to justify their inhuman conduct by pretending that Belgian coal could not compete in the world's market if they paid wages sufficient to support life decently; so, unfortunately, public opinion was deluded and stifled.

For a wage of about a pound a week the men were compelled to work very long hours. Women worked also, with the result that they became in many ways unsexed. The people lived like animals. The rate of illegitimacy rose very high at one time, and the women with most illegitimate children were most sought after in marriage, for the reason that children were sources of profit to parents, beginning to work in or about the mines from their twelfth year. They are not actually employed



PEASANT WOMAN OF THE BELGIAN ARDENNES RIDING TO MARKET

Belgians have a traditional aptitude for agriculture, and large areas of the country are subdivided among many small cultivators. Although their standard of living is low, the farmers and their wives take intelligent advantage of the advice of the State agricultural experts, or agronomes

*Photo, Miss V. Onslow*





#### LIGHT HEARTS AND SMILING FACES IN ANCIENT BRUGES

Noting his camera, these children, skipping in the Grand Place, Bruges, would not desist until they had persuaded the photographer to take a picture of them. Their smiles certainly deserve pictorial record. Anything heartier cannot easily be imagined, nor anything quainter than the stocky little urchin on the right

*Photo, F. C. Davis*

underground until they are older, but they grow up illiterate and undersized, and the sights and sounds with which they become familiar at an age when character is forming, and when the children of the comfortable classes are being shielded from all demoralising influences, make it scarcely possible for them to grow up anything but degenerate and very often brutalised.

They see most of their elders, for instance, drinking a pint a day of the vile spirit called "schnick," which is sold at a penny a wineglass, and has the most dire effect upon health and intellect. They see others drinking vast quantities of the beer called "faro" and of "genièvre," an inferior quality of gin.

The women miners wear either short tight skirts or wide knickerbockers, with a blouse like that of the men. They go barefooted or else in sabots. Round their heads they tie a handkerchief to keep the coal-dust out of their hair.

Miners of the third or fourth generation are almost a race apart. The men are seldom more than five feet in height, the women shorter. Now conditions have for a long time been steadily improving. The mines belong to companies. The original owners sold their interests when they could get the highest price for them. Companies can be worked upon by appeals to public feeling, and in their strikes for shorter hours and higher wages the miners have had the sympathy of the greater part of their fellow-countrymen.

Since 1886 strikes have been frequent in many industries, and there have been two attempts at a general strike, both failures. For a long time the efforts to secure improved conditions of work and more liberal institutions were thwarted by the ignorance of the strikers themselves. In 1893 the miners of the Borinage were urged to march upon Charleroi, and were told that the object



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A PRETTY MILKMAID IN DAINTY ATTIRE

This Flemish beauty was acclaimed the fairest of the sisterhood of Belgian milkmaids. Note the richness of her shawl and the fine lace wings on her ribboned hat

of the demonstration must be to "bring back universal suffrage." Many women accompanied the march with bags or baskets in their hands, and when they were asked why they carried them, they explained that they were "to put universal suffrage in when they brought it back." They had no idea what the words meant. The cooperative movement, however, they did understand and supported it vigorously; now there are societies all over the country which supply all their members' needs; in some places they have opened cafés and even theatres.

Politically, the workers have won electoral reforms, but the effect of these was neutralised by the Catholic Party, which introduced them, by allotting

extra votes to several classes of electors—landed proprietors, Government officials, professional men, holders of university degrees, and married men over 35. This had the effect of strengthening the Catholic Party, and of inducing the Socialists to call a general strike for the purpose of enforcing manhood suffrage. The strike, however, was not taken seriously; it lasted only a few days.

The Belgian priesthood, which has kept the Clerical Party in power by the influence which it has over Catholic voters, is a body of men who compel respect. It is drawn from all classes. Peasants send their sons to be trained as priests along with the sons of the holders of ancient titles and the wealthy merchants of Antwerp. No inducement of comfortable living is held out to the clergy. They are poorly paid, even the highest among them. An archbishop has an income of £800, bishops get £600.

The rector of a parish seldom has as much as £100 a year, with a house. Curates receive £30 a year, with board and lodging.

The clergy are, as a rule, cultivated men with simple apostolic habits and views of life. They do good work in their parishes, and their advice is sought in all matters of difficulty. Among the Flemish people of Belgium the Church finds its support far more than among the Walloons. But in almost all parts it has some hold, because it controls education to a larger extent than those who would free the mind of the young from its teaching. Once the priests have established their influence they do everything possible to maintain and strengthen it. They have all kinds of



societies for mutual help, and so, when political questions have to be decided, they can offer advantages to those who vote on their side.

The Church which, to all appearance, had, in the age preceding Belgium's emancipation, quite lost its vitality, shared in the general revival that came with liberty. "There burst forth," said an English Roman Catholic writer of the mid-nineteenth century, "all the ancient enthusiasm of the people for the church of their fathers, an enthusiasm which had slumbered in subjection to external authority. The result was that in a short time no country in the Christian world offered a fairer field to those who would contemplate the self-denial, the zeal, and the intelligence of hearts devoted to the love of God and the service of His creatures."

The clergy had a great tradition to work upon in Belgium. No country is richer in religious pictures, few can show more splendid examples of ecclesiastical architecture. Day and night the carillons sound from the church towers and steeples, filling the air with familiar melody and reminding the people of the heritage bequeathed to them by pious ancestors. Upon this foundation the Church has built with perseverance and energy.

Her influence is very great in the peasant districts, especially in the region between Ghent and Antwerp known as the Pays de Waes. Here the state of cultivation is so intense that the land supports five hundred people to the square mile. Yet less than a hundred years ago this district, now so rich, was uncultivated waste land.



CHEERY OLD FISHWIFE OF FLANDERS

Her shawl is an indispensable part of every Belgian woman's costume. She wears it crossed over her bosom, and often tucked under an apron worn over her skirt

The soil has been enriched to such good purpose that here are now the most profitable market gardens in Europe, with vineries which produce grapes equal to any in the world. The work is hard and constant, but its rewards are certain and ungrudging. Most of the cultivators own their holdings and their houses. Even from the windows of the train some idea can be gathered of the marvellous fertility of this area and of the skill and toil which go to maintain it. Those who examine it more closely find the peasants uncommunicative and, perhaps, a shade suspicious at first, but ready to make friends when they find that there is no design upon them.

That is the character of the Flemings. They are jolly people among themselves,



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but they do not suffer strangers so gladly as the French, or even as their fellow-citizens, the Walloons. They are a sturdy, self-sufficient folk, with decided opinions which it takes generations to modify. They are thrifty and good house-managers. As a rule, they have money put away or invested. For the most part, they own their homes. One tenth of the population of Belgium own land, small plots, but sufficient to keep them and their families, or, at all events, to add to the family well-being. Nearly half the owners of land own less than one hundred acres; the number of large landed proprietors is small. In some districts farmers rent their acreage from proprietors or from local authorities, but ownership of the land cultivated is the general rule.

As their history shows, the Belgians are sturdy in standing up for their rights. They have an independence of character which easily becomes aggressive, and other of their characteristics prove that they are nearly related by blood to the people of the British Isles. Their love of home may be taken as an example. The saying "East, west, home's best," which most Britons would say was either English or Scottish, is, in fact, a Flemish saying.

In other traits they are unlike their cousins by blood across the North Sea. They are an economical folk. All classes share the desire to get as much as possible for a franc. Even the most prominent people live in a modest style. It is a country where modesty of household management is possible, together



**NOTABLE FIGURES IN THE PICTURESQUE PAGEANT OF THE HOLY BLOOD**  
Many scenes in the life and passion of our Lord are represented in this wonderful religious ceremony. Here the Virgin Mother is seen carrying the infant Saviour to his presentation at the Temple, accompanied by Joseph, taking his sacrificial offering of two young pigeons





#### THE ANNUAL PROCESSION OF THE HOLY BLOOD AT BRUGES

Drops of the blood of the Saviour brought from the Holy Land in 1150 by Theodoric, Count of Flanders, are preserved in a chapel built by him for their reception in the Grand Place, Bruges. Once a year the bishop bears the relic in solemn procession through the crowded streets

with a high degree of comfort. Living before the war was cheap, and prices will gradually go back towards their former level. As an instance of the unwillingness of Belgians of the comfortable classes to spend money

unnecessarily may be cited the custom they have of leaving cards upon each other at the New Year. The French exchange little presents. Their neighbours are content with the less expensive courtesy. This custom is





THE CHOIR OF ANGELS, WHITE-ROBED AND BEARING LILIES, ATTENDANT ON THE HOLY BLOOD

Annually, on the first Monday after May 2nd, the gem-studded, silver-gilt reliquary is taken from its resting-place in the ancient chapel of Theodoric and carried through the streets of Bruges escorted by the ecclesiastical, civil, and military authorities. The centuries-old ceremony attracts crowds of the faithful and of sightseers from all parts of the world





#### PENITENTS CARRYING THE CROSS IN THE FURNES PASSION PLAY

Ever since the twelfth century a great Penitential Procession has been held annually in Furnes on the last Sunday in July. The story of the Passion is dramatically represented in Flemish, together with scenes from the Old Testament

observed especially by officials, who, in Belgium, form a class which receives unusual consideration. To be in a Government office is reckoned the height of respectability, and many parents prefer to see their sons functionaries, though they know the rewards are slight, to seeing them make money in business. This is particularly true of parents in Brussels. In Antwerp, the commercial capital of the country, the feeling is more the other way. Here business is regarded as the chief aim in life, and the official is a little looked down upon.

The Antwerp people are quite different from the Bruxellois; they have more money, and they spend it freely upon enjoyment and display. Here are markets of many products, rubber and ivory may be named as two of them, which regulate prices all over the Continent. Here is the chief Stock Exchange of the country. The shipping

interests of Antwerp need no description. All who visit Belgium know the magnificent dock system with which Napoleon endowed the city on the Schelde, and which has been developed with enterprising sagacity by the citizens in succeeding ages.

There are fine houses in Brussels, there is a famous opera; there is a quiet, cultivated social life. But in Antwerp the social atmosphere is felt at once to be different. There is far more expansiveness, less formality. In Brussels hospitality is regulated by definite conventions. A guest is not quickly invited, and when the decision to invite him has been taken, every effort is made to give him something superior to the family's daily fare. Casual hospitality is scarcely known at all. In Antwerp guests are daily occurrences. They can be asked at short notice, and they find little difference made for them. In the houses of the wealthy Anversois





LITTLE MAIDENS TELLING THE ROSARY

Religion is deeply rooted in Belgian life, and on the Flemish part of the population especially the Church has a firm hold and a live influence

round the pleasant boulevards which semi-circle the city there is ordinarily to be found a kindly and sincere welcome from people who seem to be more in and of the world than those who form the society of the capital. In Brussels there were cliques. Doctors consorted chiefly with doctors, lawyers with lawyers, diplomatists kept together; only here and there could there be found a mixture. In Antwerp there was far less exclusiveness, the barriers were fewer; therefore society was less provincial in tone.

Antwerp prides itself not only upon taking the lead in commerce, but upon

its more alert intelligence as well. In general, indeed, it may be said that Antwerp has more of the marks of a capital city than Brussels, though it has no desire for the transference of politics to the banks of the Schelde. In Ghent and Liège and Namur there are men and women of light and leading. The famous iron-works of the Meuse in the Liège region have developed an intense local life. The old lace and embroidery trade of Ghent and the newer industries which turn out engines and agricultural machines have brought the ancient city prosperity such as it has not known since the Middle Ages. Its population had dropped from 250,000, which was enormous in the fifteenth century, to a mere 40,000. Grass grew in its once crowded streets, its canals were unused. It became a shadow of its former self. What Bruges has remained, a sad spectre of a once populous town, Ghent was, until the revival of its industries began. When it invited the world to its International

Exhibition in 1913, its recovery caused surprise and admiration. Whether a like recovery is possible at Bruges, which was killed by the creation of the port of Antwerp, must depend upon the development of trade through Zeebrugge (which will ever be associated with glorious deeds of the British Navy in the Great War).

In all towns a peculiarity of houses below the first order is the possession of a "show-room," a room filled with the most expensive furniture that the owner can afford, but scarcely ever used by the family, and kept for the



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entertainment of visitors, for show. They make a cold, uncomfortable impression upon visitors from Britain, these Belgian show-rooms. Being seldom sat in, they look deserted. They have a formal, unreal appearance. Yet they are a source of pride and pleasure to their owners. To be without a show-room would be considered equal to accepting a lower social position. The purchase of a suite of hideous furniture which is not to be used marks a stage in the growth of a family's upward progress. Even barge-folk on the Belgian canals are said to show their ambition by trying to fit up a show-room in their barges.

These canal people are a distinct class of the population. They have none of the disagreeable qualities once attributed to the British bargee. Their language is no more lurid than that of dwellers upon dry land. They make their canal homes attractive in appearance, with tidily-curtained windows to the cabins, with flowers in pots on deck, often with quite a little garden; and if you go inside you find that they make themselves very comfortable. If your visit be paid towards midday there will certainly be a savoury smell from the cooking galley, and any visitor who makes himself pleasant or dispenses a little tactful flattery will be asked to share the meal.

It is at midday that nearly all Belgians take their principal meal. The universal custom in all ranks and occupations is to breakfast very lightly. A cup of coffee and a small roll is what most of them begin the day on, and they begin it at a much earlier hour than we do. Their best work is done in the morning, and as noon



### THE CHURCH TAKES EARLY HOLD IN BELGIUM

The Belgian parish priests, cultivated men leading simple lives, establish an ascendancy over the children at an early age and maintain a large control over their education

approaches they begin to feel exhausted. It is unwise to go into an office to talk any kind of business after half-past eleven. Prudent men pay their visits between nine and eleven. From twelve to two nothing is done. These two hours are given up to dinner, a solid meal which furnishes the principal nourishment of the day. In the evening the Belgians eat more lightly, and except among women, and perhaps a few men of cosmopolitan habits, afternoon tea is unknown. As beer is drunk with dinner, or, more rarely, wine, and as coffee is taken afterwards, no need of any stimulant is felt until the hour of the evening meal





#### HOMeward-BOUND ALONG THE BANKS OF THE MEUSE

Belgian carter with his horses tassel-protected against flies. The river is enclosed by immense limestone cliffs now and then bursting bare from among the trees which grow wherever they can find foothold. Woods of copper beech and silver birch make both banks of the stream lovely

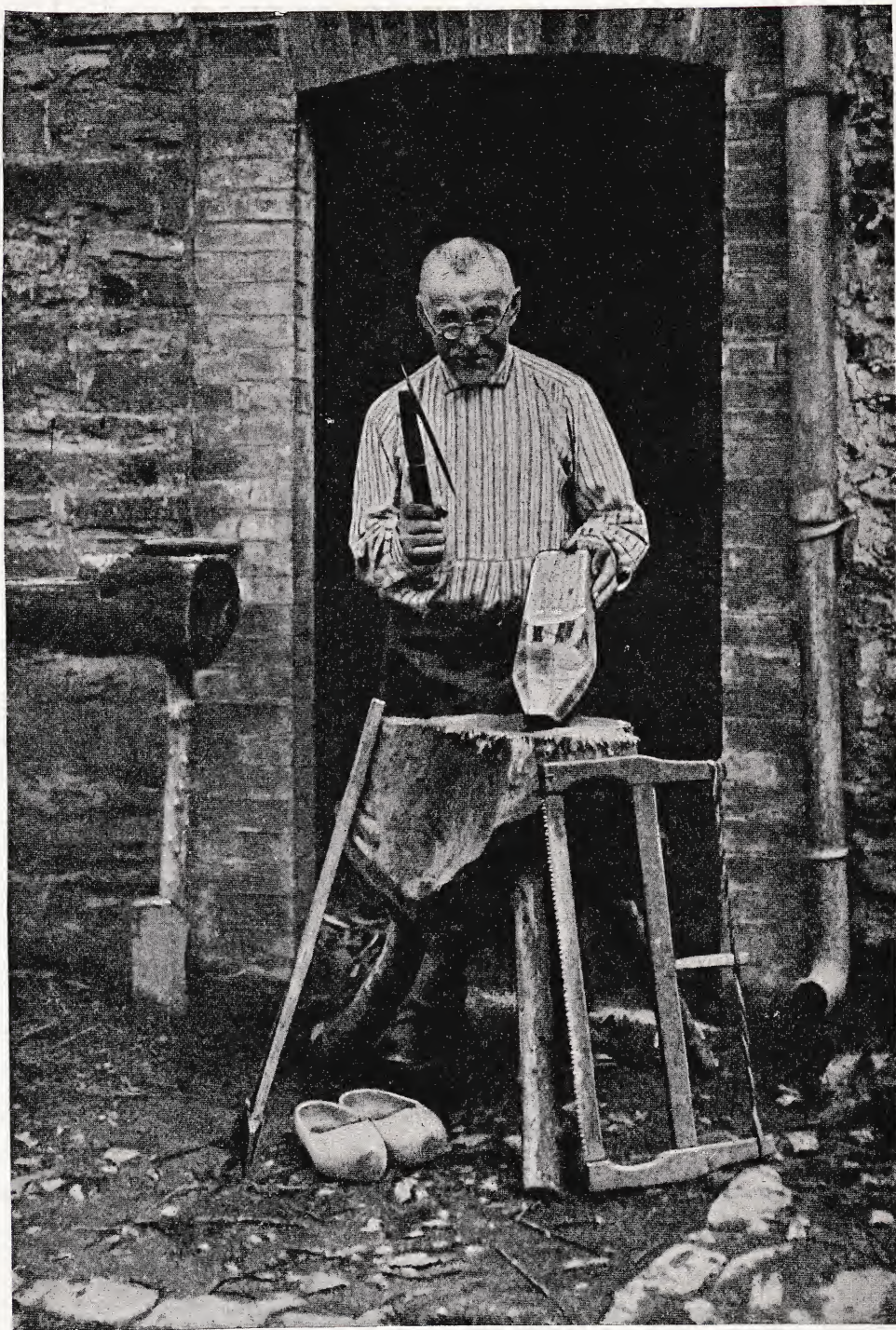


#### BELGIAN PRACTITIONERS OF THE GENTLE ART OF ANGLING

Fishing on the Meuse. Between Namur and Dinant many of the views are entrancing. Ruined castles magnificently placed crown the highest points, gnome-inhabited caverns penetrate the marble mountains, and romance suffuses the entire atmosphere. Summer steamer trips are sheer delight

*Photos, Miss V. Onslow*





**AN OLD SABOT MAKER BUSY AT HIS COTTAGE DOOR**

A distinguishing feature of Belgian social life is the prevalence of homework. Nearly all the working-classes wear sabots, warm, dry footgear usually made of beech, and the manufacture of these, with a notably simple outfit of tools, is a widespread cottage industry

*Photo, Miss V. Onslow*





TRAPPIST MONKS, SILENT AS THEIR DUMB OXEN, HAYMAKING IN BELGIUM

Silence, prayer, and manual labour are the things principally enjoined by the rigorous rule of the existing order of Trappists as refounded by Jean de la Ranc  in 1662. The order has experienced many vicissitudes and has few monasteries now. This one, at Cardemois, in Belgium, suffered sorely at German hands in 1914

*Photo, Miss V. Onslow*



## BELGIUM & THE BELGIANS

arrives. This hour is generally not much before eight. Belgians are apt to work late as well as to start early. And after supper most Belgians go early to bed.

Thus there is not much time left to them for reading. They are not, indeed, a studious folk. Their excellent newspapers in French and Flemish are well read by all classes. But those who carry their desire for knowledge and the stimulus of literature beyond this are not more than a small number. Even the most distinguished Belgian man of letters in this generation, Maurice Maeterlinck, is better known outside than inside his own country. He began his writing career in Paris. He lives in

been revived among the educated. A demand was put forward for a Flemish University, and a good many writers have taken to expressing themselves in Flemish. This created the same sympathy between the Belgian Flemings and the Dutch as exists between the Walloons and the French; but so far the small class of cultivated people in the country, who all speak French, derive their culture mainly from France.

This small class can hold its own in all societies. It has taste and judgement in art as well as literature. There is a modern school of Belgian painters. In the movement known as *L'Art Nouveau*, that is to say, Art



GIRL LABOURERS AT THE MARIE-MONT-BASCOUN COALMINES

Large numbers of women work in the mines in the Belgian Black Country. They wear knickerbockers, blouses like the men's, and a handkerchief tied over their hair to keep out as much coaldust as possible. Their conditions of life, once very bad, are gradually improving

Normandy. His plays have had their first productions in France, England, or the United States. He spoke once to me of this, but he did not reproach his countrymen. He knows the value of what they have done in the material sphere, and understands that they have not yet reached the stage of having full leisure for the enjoyment of art.

Maeterlinck has written in French, although he is a Fleming; so have all the other Belgian writers who are widely known. Until a few years ago it seemed as if the Flemish language might eventually be swept away by French. Interest in Flemish, however, has now

directed to purposes of household decoration, the Belgian designers and craftsmen took a foremost part. In the preserving of their ancient buildings and the arrangement of their collections of the pictures of great masters, the most praiseworthy reverence and taste have been shown. But the mass of the people are concerned exclusively with the practical affairs of life, in plainer words, with their businesses or other occupations. If their interests had been more varied, they might possibly have found life more agreeable, but the development of their country could not have gone forward at so rapid a rate.





Pathos and terror of war are both illustrated here, but the sympathy of Allies is also represented by the British officer's kindly interest in the safety of the old Belgian woman and her household goods, while the patient allies harnessed to the cart are symbolical of other alliances which the war produced

*Photo, Imperial War Museum*



#### ECHOES OF THE OLD UNHAPPY DAYS OF WAR

No pictorial review of the life of Belgium can quite avoid a reminiscence of the scenes of flight enacted there in the days of the Great War. The first country to feel the shock of the invader, it was the last to be freed, and after its long agony it is a remarkable tribute to the energy and optimism of its people that it should have made the rapid recovery which recent years have witnessed

*Photo, International Film Service*



# Belgium

## II. The Story of its Many Fights for Freedom

By Emile Cammaerts

Author of "Belgium from Roman Times to the Present Day"

**W**HEN, in 57 B.C., Julius Caesar invaded Northern Gaul and the country of the Belgae, including the basins of the Schelde and the Meuse, he met with stubborn resistance from a series of tribes of Celtic origin, already mixed with a certain amount of Germanic blood, in the eastern marches adjoining the Rhine. These tribes, rapidly permeated with Roman culture, after the first Christianisation of the country could not be distinguished from their southern neighbours and bore, with them, the name of Gallo-Romans.

### Invading Flood of Germanic Tribes

In the fourth century a sweeping change occurred. The decadent Empire was unable any longer to dam the flood of the Germanic tribes from the east and the north, and Roman rule was superseded by the rule of the Frankish kings, whose first capital was established at Tournai. Both parts of the country, however, were not equally subjected to Frankish influence. North of a line extending approximately from Ypres to Liège, the old population was virtually wiped out or subjected to slavery. South of this line, the Gallo-Romans were able to maintain themselves in great numbers, and even considerably to influence the manner and religion of their conquerors. This was due to the presence of a large virgin forest called by the Romans the *Silva Carbonaria*, or Coal Wood, whose northern limit exactly coincides with the line dividing the Gallo-Romans from the purely Germanic population. This forest acted as a wooden rampart against the stream of invaders who could only penetrate gradually and by small groups through the hilly country of the south, while establishing themselves freely in the open plains and marshes of the north.

### Why there are Two Races in Belgium

The southern people, called Walla, may be considered the forefathers of the Walloons of the present day, who talk French and French patois; the Franks, later, were called Dietschen, and are the ancestors of the Flemings, who talk Dutch and Dutch patois. Such is the origin of this duality of race and language which constitutes so characteristic a feature of Belgian history and civilization, combining French and Germanic characteristics, and

making Belgium the natural intermediary between the three great countries between which she is placed.

Up to the twelfth century the history of the Belgian provinces is unimportant from the European point of view. They enjoyed a period of remarkable splendour in the ninth century, when they became the centre of Charlemagne's Empire, but when this Empire broke up they were divided between the two rival Powers—France and Germany (Flanders and Lotharingia)—and a series of feudal princes who paid their allegiance either to the emperor or to the king.

Nowhere else in Europe were the characteristics of feudalism more strongly marked, and during that period there was no sign of the unity and subordination which characterises modern States. It is nevertheless important to note that the county of Flanders, the county of Hainault, the Duchy of Brabant, the prince bishopric of Liège, etc., were the origin of the present day provinces similarly named, though the limits of these fiefs differed considerably from those of the modern provinces.

### Belgium's Geographical Advantages

During the twelfth century the hegemony of the Communes replaced the over-lordships of the princes, owing to the early development of trade and industry. The advantageous geographical position occupied by Belgium, opposite the coast of England and between the markets of France and Germany, gave Bruges, Ghent, Ypres, and many other Belgian towns a great prosperity, and the pride taken by the merchants and the corporations in their respective towns can still be seen in the belfries and corporation houses which have been preserved.

Relationship between Belgium, especially Flanders, and England was very close at the time, owing to the development of the cloth industry, and, more than once, the Flemish towns were placed in the dilemma either of breaking their vow of loyalty to their French suzerain, or of seeing their country ruined through the hostility of England.

This difficulty led frequently to war, and the memory of the Battle of the Golden Spurs (1302), when the town militias of Bruges and Ghent defeated the flower of French chivalry and hung seven hundred of their spurs in the church of Courtrai, is still alive in the country.



## BELGIUM'S STORY

The cathedral of Tournai is the most remarkable ecclesiastical monument of the time, but, even at that early period, Belgium shone more by its civic monuments than by its churches. The Belfry of Bruges, since the destruction of the Ypres Cloth Hall, must be considered as the most characteristic building of the period.

The period of centralization, postponed by the striking development of the Communes, which created such deep-rooted traditions of particularism, took place in the early fifteenth century, when the dukes of Burgundy succeeded in adding to the county of Flanders, which they had inherited, nearly every principality in the country. Under Philip the Good the Belgian provinces extended from the Somme to the Zuyder Zee, and

economic prosperity, but for the art of their painters (Van Eyck, Memlinc, etc.), the genius of their architects (town-halls of Bruges, Brussels, Louvain, etc.), and the inspiration of their musicians.

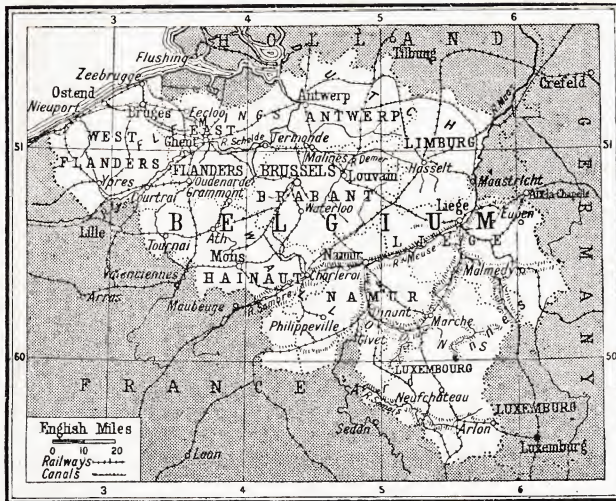
This period of splendour was brought to an end by the imperialist policy of Charles the Bold, who attempted vainly to reconstitute the ancient Empire of Lotharingia and to link his Belgian with his Burgundian possessions. This prince died in 1477, leaving the responsibility of his throne to his daughter, Mary of Burgundy. The latter, to protect herself against the intrigues of Louis XI. of France, her father's enemy, married the Archduke Maximilian of Austria, heir of the Hapsburg dynasty, and the Belgian provinces, unhappily, no longer found themselves placed under the rule of national

princes, but under the rule of princes whose principal interests were not Belgian, but either Austrian or Spanish. This is the main cause of the decadence of Belgian civilization in modern times.

In spite of this unfortunate alliance, the impetus received by the country during the fifteenth century prolonged its action during the first part of the sixteenth century, and even awoke a last echo in the seventeenth, after the Wars of Religion had definitely wrecked the economic and political prosperity of the Southern Netherlands. First under Philip the Handsome, Maximilian's son (1493-1506), later under Charles, afterwards Emperor

Charles V. (1515-1555), the Belgian provinces enjoyed periods of great prosperity and of relative peace, though the external wars in which the Emperor was engaged proved a heavy drain on their resources and caused considerable discontent. Trade became more and more concentrated in Antwerp, and Flemish paintings acquired an international celebrity, though, from the purely artistic point of view, they had deteriorated since the previous period through Italian influence.

The sixteenth century revolution of the Netherlands against Philip II. of Spain, Charles' son, was the natural and fatal outcome of the accession of the Hapsburg monarchs to the governorship of Belgium. Up to then the Belgian princes had, at least, been educated in the country and knew its languages. Philip II. was a Spaniard, and administered the



BELGIUM AND ITS PEOPLES

from the sea to the neighbourhood of the Rhine.

Central administration was considerably strengthened, to the great benefit of the country which had been so long divided by civil war and town rivalries, and the foundations of the Belgian modern State were definitely laid. Brussels became the capital of the dukes, and Antwerp gradually superseded Bruges as the most important market of Northern Europe.

The cloth industry was ruined by the competition of the English looms, but the linen industry replaced it successfully, and the riches and power enjoyed by the dukes rendered them entirely independent of France and Germany. Indeed, they were, for a time, the arbiters of Europe, and their alliance was sought by French and English alike. Under their rule the Belgian provinces ranked first among European nations, not only for their





#### BELGIAN PEOPLE IN THEIR TIME OF STRESS

Wives, mothers, and sisters of the fighting men experienced anxious moments in those early days of the Great War, for there was fear of a growing scarcity of bread. The Belgian Government officials doled out rations scrupulously and untiringly to the endless queues such as that shown in this photograph, taken in Brussels. The demeanour of these people shows a calmness in time of stress characteristic of the Belgian

*Photo, International Film Service*

Netherlands as foreign possessions, through a series of Governors who possessed no initiative. Even if the relentless quarrels provoked by the Reformation had not coincided with his reign, a revolution could not have been avoided, but it would have been a national revolution preserving the unity of the Netherlands. Thanks to the religious division between the Calvinist Northerners and the Catholic Southerners, Spanish rule was able to maintain itself in Belgium, the United Provinces, later Holland, becoming entirely independent (1581) under the leadership of William of Orange.

#### Fatal Divisions in Spanish Struggle

Again and again during the struggle the southern and northern provinces tried to arrive at an agreement against Spain, and it seemed that such an agreement had been achieved at the time of the Pacification of Ghent (1576). But the principle of religious tolerance, on which alone such union could have been established, was not observed by the Northern Calvinists, whose attitude provoked a rapprochement between the Catholics of the South and the Spaniards. The Union of Utrecht

was opposed to the Confederation of Arras, and the Spanish forces failing to conquer the northern provinces, the division of the country became inevitable. This division was fatal to the southern provinces, whose resources were considerably reduced. Placed between Holland and France, the enemies of Spain, they were subjected to constant attacks as the weakest outpost of the latter.

#### Brilliance of the Belgian Renaissance

Under the rule of the Archduke Albert and Isabella (daughter of Philip II.), the Belgian provinces enjoyed a short period of intellectual, if not economic, prosperity. A twelve years' truce was concluded with the United Provinces (1609-21), and Belgium became again the centre of a brilliant artistic movement under the leadership of the Court painter and diplomat Peter Paul Rubens, who may be considered the chief representative of the Renaissance in Flanders as Van Eyck and Memlinc were of the primitive schools.

After the death of Isabella (1633), the country fell into complete political and economic decadence. The Dutch had



## BELGIUM'S STORY

established themselves on the lower reaches of the Schelde, and for two centuries the river remained closed and the trade of Antwerp was completely ruined. Industry suffered accordingly, and agriculture became the mainstay of the country, which had ceased to play any prominent part in the economic life of Europe. Used as a buffer State by the Dutch, who benefited from the ruin of its trade, invaded again and again by French armies, the country suffered all the consequences of war and defeat.

### A Century of Loss and Ruin

By the Treaty of Münster (1648), between Spain and the United Provinces, Belgium lost definitely both banks of the mouth of the Schelde, North Brabant, and Maastricht. By the Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659), between France and Spain, she lost the whole of Artois and several fortified towns in the South. By the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), concluded between France and the Grand Alliance, after the war of the Spanish succession, the Southern Netherlands were transferred to the Austrian branch of the Hapsburg dynasty, and the Treaty of the Barriers (1715), between the Emperor Charles VI. and Holland, gave the Dutch the right to garrison a series of towns along the Belgian border, in order to protect themselves against French aggression. The situation improved slightly under the Austrian regime, peace being maintained with the exception of four years of French invasion (1744-48) during the war of the Austrian succession. Various efforts were made to resume foreign trade and to open the Schelde, and the Ostend Company, founded in 1753, succeeded even in establishing some factories on the coasts of Bengal and Southern China, but, under the pressure of the naval Powers, the company had to be suppressed.

### Revolt Against the Austrian Oppressor

In 1785 the Emperor Joseph II., who had succeeded in abolishing the Dutch barrier, made a vain attempt to re-open the Schelde, which was checked by the efforts of European diplomacy. The latter sovereign, who was influenced by the spirit of eighteenth century philosophy, introduced stringent reforms, interfering with religious traditions and suppressing local liberties which the Belgians had succeeded in maintaining from the time of Mary of Burgundy. This caused the Brabançonne revolution of 1789, the Austrians only re-establishing themselves in the country one year later. They were soon to be driven from it by the French republican troops, under Dumouriez (1792).

For thirteen years Belgium was subjected to the excesses of French republican

rule, against which the peasantry attempted a vain rising when conscription was applied to the country (1798). Order was restored under Napoleon, who introduced, in the annexed provinces, the French judicial and administrative methods, together with the code of laws which bears his name. The Schelde had been re-opened under the Republic, but incessant wars prevented Antwerp from reaping the benefits of the change. From the middle of the seventeenth century artistic activity had virtually ceased, the intellectual development of the country being hampered by the economic lethargy and by absence of intercourse with foreign lands.

The Congress of Vienna (1814) gave the Belgian provinces to William of Orange in order to form the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, which was to be a bulwark in the north against the encroachments of France. The union was supposed to place both countries on an equal footing. As a matter of fact, the southern provinces were subordinated to Dutch interests, and the two countries having developed on entirely separate lines since the sixteenth century, the unity could not be maintained.

### Independence Opens Era of Prosperity

A revolution broke out in 1830 and, at the Congress of London, the representatives of the Powers framed the conditions under which Belgium's independence would be recognized. Territorially, Belgium lost Dutch Flanders with the left bank of the Schelde, part of Limburg, and half of Luxembourg, the other half forming the grand-duchy of that name. The treaties of 1831, not accepted by Holland until 1839, declared Belgium neutral, and placed this neutrality and integrity under the guarantee of the signatory Powers.

Under the reign of Leopold I., Leopold II., and Albert, Belgium enjoyed an era of extraordinary prosperity. Her Constitution was among the most democratic in Europe, and the Schelde being opened to ships of all nations in time of peace (in time of war Holland preserves the right to close the river), Antwerp regained a great part of its former prosperity.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Belgium occupied the first rank in Europe for the density of its population (397 per square mile), the relative length of its railway system, the figure of its internal and external trade per head of population, and the yield of its crops per acre. In spite of its small size it came fifth among the great trading nations of the world. It possessed in the Belgian Congo, taken over by the Belgian State from Leopold II. in 1908, one of the richest of African colonies.



## BELGIUM'S STORY

The intellectual activity of the people was no less striking, a remarkable artistic school having again sprung up from the first days of the period of independence, and such musicians as César Franck, and writers such as Émile Verhaeren and Maurice Maeterlinck, have acquired a European reputation.

In spite of the warning of her kings and of some clear-sighted patriots, the country was not seriously prepared for the violation of her national charter and the sudden aggression of two of the guarantors of her neutrality. Nevertheless, from 1914 to 1918, the army opposed a stubborn resistance to the efforts of the German invader, succeeding in maintaining itself on the Yser in the extreme north-western corner of the country.

Since the Armistice the Belgians have successfully achieved the reconstruction of the ravages caused by the enemy, first by the ruthless sacking of many towns and

villages, and, at a later stage, by a systematic exploitation on a large scale of raw material, machinery, and human labour.

By the Treaty of Versailles (1919) Belgium received a slight territorial extension by the annexation, after popular consultation, of the Walloon districts of Eupen and Malmédy. She also obtained a right of priority on the German indemnity and a proportion of eight per cent. on the total of this indemnity. In Africa she undertook the mandate for Ruanda and Urundi, part of the former German East Africa. All restrictions with regard to Belgian policy in foreign affairs were removed. Neutrality having become obsolete, Belgium concluded a military defensive convention with France in 1920, and negotiations are still pending with Holland for the revision of the 1839 treaties, especially the provisions concerning the control of the Schelde.

## BELGIUM: FACTS AND FIGURES

### The Country

European country (Royaume de Belgique) lying between Holland, Germany, Luxemburg, and France, with about forty miles of coast on North Sea. Consists of nine provinces of Antwerp, Limburg, West and East Flanders, Brabant, Hainault, Liège, Namur, and Luxembourg. Walloon districts of Malmédy and Eupen (area about 717 square miles, population 77,000) were added to Belgium by Treaty of Versailles. Area about 11,400 square miles. Population (1919) about 7,577,000, varying in density from 135 to the square mile in Luxembourg to 1,158 in Brabant. A little under 3,000,000 are French speaking, and a little over 3,000,000 are Flemish speaking. The other 1,500,000 speak mixture of French and German, or Flemish and German.

### Government and Constitution

A Constitutional and hereditary monarchy, legislative power being vested in the King, Senate, and Chamber of Representatives. An act of the King must be countersigned by one of his ministers. The King calls together and dissolves the two Chambers. Elections in 1919 of Senate and Chamber of Representatives were on universal suffrage basis, and constitution of legislature and its powers therefore were subject to radical revision. Senate as elected numbered 120, elected, partly directly and partly indirectly, on property qualifications. Chamber of Representatives numbered 186, and were elected directly in proportion to population (1 to 40,000) every four years. Deputies are paid, and have free railway passes. Constitution provides complete religious equality, freedom of Press, personal inviolability, and rights of public meeting. Local government is by Communal councils (2,633 Communes) elected by proportional representation on universal suffrage basis every six years.

### Army

Service is partly compulsory and partly by voluntary enlistment, for fifteen to twenty-four months spread over eight years, followed by five years in reserve. Post-war army consisted of six infantry and one cavalry divisions, with total of 100,000 men. There are also civic guard and gendarmerie. There is no navy.

### Commerce and Industries

Nearly half total area is under cultivation, a special feature being intensive cultivation. An official agricultural commission is appointed in each province. Delegates from these commissions, together with certain specialist members, form a general council of agriculture. Chief crops with annual average pre-war production are: Wheat (400,000 tons); oats (700,000 tons); rye (550,000 tons); barley (90,000 tons); potatoes (3,000,000 tons); sugar beet (1,500,000 tons); Cattle, pigs, and sheep are reared in considerable numbers.

Industrial activity largely due to coalfields of the Borinage, producing about twenty-three and a half million tons per annum. Iron ore production greatly reduced owing to exhaustion of ironfields, production in 1914 being 82,000 tons compared with 280,000 tons in 1900. Pig iron production quarter of a million tons 1919, two and a half million tons 1913. Great metal factories round Liège and elsewhere. Zinc and lead are also produced.

Other important industries are sugar (pre-war 280,000 tons), artificial silk, lace (machine and hand-made), linen, glass, gloves, and motor-cars. Exports in 1920 were 10,346,000 tons; imports 11,711,000 tons. To Great Britain £45,024,000; from Great Britain £49,126,000. Principal trade is with France, Holland, Great Britain, and Germany.

### Communications

Most roads are stone paved (pavé), total length 6,177 miles, of which 5,187 miles are State roads. Rivers and canals, 1,231 miles; railways, 4,640 miles, of which 2,759 are owned and managed by the State; only 184 miles in private hands, balance being represented by light railways. Electrification of State system is under consideration.

### Chief Towns

Brussels and suburbs (685,000); Antwerp (323,000); Liège (167,000); Ghent (166,000); Malines (60,000); Bruges (53,000); Ostend (46,000); Louvain (40,000); Courtrai (37,000); Alost (36,000); Tournai (36,000); Namur (32,000); Charleroi (28,000).





#### SPEARMAN AND BATTLE-AXEMAN IN MAGIC WARPAINT

The spearman is the leader, and the more picturesque, feather-topped man, with a battle-axe, is a follower, who cheers on the attack with screaming war songs. Their colours and patterns are serious matters of high witchcraft, which insure them against all the physical perils of warfare. Only if the enemy uses stronger magic can they be hurt.

*Photo, Mrs. J. H. Harris*